



## NOVEMBER 2021 PROGRESS REPORT

The following updates illustrate progress since September on priorities outlined in the strategic plan, *St. Thomas 2025*.

### Lead in STEAM Education

Don Weinkauf, Dean of the School of Engineering, will represent St. Thomas as a member of Governor Tim Walz' trade delegation to the United Kingdom and Finland later this month. The Governor's trip will highlight our state's medical and bio-technology industry opportunities. At the same time, First Lady Gwen Walz is leading a higher education delegation. Don will represent us well in both of these sector visits and will also help host a St. Thomas alumni gathering in London at the U.S. Embassy during the trip.

### Grow the Morrison Family College of Health

After very successful visits from reviewers and intense preparation work, we expect final approval from the Higher Learning Commission for our two pre-licensure nursing programs, Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) and Master's of Science in Nursing (MSN), in mid-November. Successfully completing this last regulatory step means we can begin student recruitment in earnest and advertise our School of Nursing with the broader community in anticipation of our fall 2022 opening.

Our schools and colleges continue to intentionally increase federal funding activity. The School of Social Work and the School of Education jointly received a \$1.2 million grant in September from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) in the U. S. Department of Education to fund scholarships for students in social work and education. The grant will help us further embed trauma-informed care into our curriculum, helping teach how to care for young children with intensive needs, including those from refugee and immigrant backgrounds.

### Foster Belonging and Dismantle Racism

The Racial Justice Initiative received funding from the Pohlad Family Foundation to work with Twin Cities Public Television to produce a documentary about the history of policing

in Minneapolis. Fox 9 News recently interviewed Dr. Yohuru Williams about the subject, providing a preview of the documentary.

Dr. Williams continues to keynote many key engagements and garner local and national media appearances. In early October, he keynoted the University of Scranton Ignatian Values lecture series for all new students at the University of Scranton, and recently spoke with CNN News on legislation related to voting rights.

### Promote and Leverage Our Comprehensive Academic Excellence

Results of our annual “awareness tracker” survey showed positive movement compared to previous years. The overall positive association with St. Thomas has gone up, while cost as a top-of-mind association with St. Thomas continues to decline. This uptick in association with value was reinforced when we made the US News list on Best Value Colleges. St. Thomas was also ranked recently by the online publication Stacker in its list of the 50 Best Colleges in Big Cities for 2021. A Chicago Tribune article highlighted our, “Main campus along an avenue of Victorian homes in St. Paul but also a location in downtown Minneapolis. Students can develop professional ties to the community and explore job possibilities at the region’s corporations and businesses, especially from the schools located in Minneapolis: the Opus College of Business, School of Law, School of Education and the Dougherty Family College, which offers two-year associate degrees.” Stacker looked at the best colleges in big U.S. cities, using 2021 Niche rankings that considered schools based on their academics, admissions, financial value, and student life.

### Expand Our Pipeline of Students

For the first time, we are producing enrollment advertisements in Somali, Spanish and Hmong (with an ad featuring the voice of our own MayKao Hang, VP and Dean of the Morrison Family College of Health). We are also doing a media buy with Univision for the first time.

Expanding our pipeline is the top priority of Executive Vice President and Provost, Dr. Eddy Rojas. He is working with an enrollment consultant from Northeastern University with experience in broadening enrollment to a national scope. He will work with our enrollment management, marketing, insights and communication, and information technology service teams to assess our enrollment strategy and provide guidance on increasing our geographic reach.

### Lean Into our Catholic Mission

The School of Law launched the Initiative on Restorative Justice and Healing that will promote healing through restorative justice practices. At the launch event on October 13, they partnered with the Racial Justice Initiative to explore how understanding the history of racial discrimination plays a role in restoring justice. Dean Rob Vischer and Dr. Yohuru Williams currently co-teach a course on race and the law at the law school and together led discussions on how faith and history play roles in understanding and seeking racial justice. The second and third subject areas for the Initiative are identifying and helping heal the

harm done by institutional and leadership failures, including clergy abuse in the Catholic Church but also more broadly; as well as societal and ecclesial polarization. Healing circles, led in part by St. Thomas law professor Fr. Dan Griffith, where people share their stories and the Church acknowledges the harm done, have been part of efforts at restorative justice in the archdiocese in the wake of the clergy sexual abuse crisis.

### Ensure a Robust Residency Culture

Our first-year students are the first class to experience our new two-year residency requirement. This fall we are housing 94% of the first-time, first-year (FTFY) cohort in our residence halls. This compares to 87-91% on average the past five years. A specific gift from the Haggerty family allowed us to provide a room and board award to students who otherwise would have lived at home. About 75% of the Haggerty award recipients identify as students of color and another 15% are international students. This award was a wonderful opportunity for just over 30 students of color to live and learn on campus with us this fall. The percentage of first-year students of color living in the residence halls is typically 60-70%, was as low as 53% in fall 2020, and grew dramatically to 84% in fall of 2021.

The new residence halls, Tommie North and Tommie East have brought new vitality to the north quad. Tommie North is housing over 450 first-year students and hosts our First-Year Experience and Living Learning Community (LLC) classes in the two new classrooms. The Northsider Dining Hall, community theater, club room, lounges, and study rooms are in heavy use and provide opportunities for students to be together in person. Tommie East is home to over 140 first-year students and over 100 second-year and upper-division students. This Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Platinum Hall is receiving great feedback from students and families about the pod-style designs, community kitchens and study rooms, and the large community lounge with beautiful lobby/living room area.

Dowling and Brady Halls are being fully renovated this academic year. Additional community spaces will allow students to create connections, learn and develop together, and find their sense of belonging on campus.

As part of our First-Year Experience learning community requirement, just under half of our first-year students live in a Living Learning Community (LLC). These residential communities connect students with faculty and academic units and build peer relationships within their community. We have 11 LLCs spanning across our academic colleges/schools, and plans are in the works to add a nursing LLC next academic year.

### Engage All Tommies as Changemakers

Just one month into the fall semester, Tommies already have contributed more than 10,000 hours of direct volunteer service in the community. As part of the St. Thomas 2025 strategic plan, the goal is to achieve 125,000 hours of direct service from our St. Thomas community in a year. Despite an interruption in many activities due to COVID, last year, our St. Thomas community engaged in 80,000 hours of community work – a number that matches our overall engaged hours from the 2019-2020 academic year.

The focus this year for the Center for the Common Good is volunteer and advocacy work surrounding food insecurity, housing justice, the education opportunity gap, climate change and racial justice. They report an increase in the number of faculty expressing interest in and committing to community-engaged learning through their teaching and scholarship.

**Shelter Crew, the Center's housing justice program, is gaining new momentum as student leaders and volunteers are responding to the Twin Cities' affordable housing crisis, especially as it impacts people experiencing homelessness. Shelter Crew volunteers collaborate with Catholic Charities to prepare and serve meals while reflecting with one another on how they as "common good change agents" can take part in addressing the structural and systemic issues that cause inequities within our communities.**

### Living and Working Sustainably

**St. Thomas joined the Laudato Si' Action Platform, a new initiative of the Vatican to engage people around the world in caring for our common home. We were among the first universities to answer Pope Francis' call to creating a more sustainable world.**

This fall, the Tommie North Residence Hall received a LEED silver certification for new construction from the U.S. Green Building Council. LEED is the most widely used green building rating system in the world and an international symbol of excellence.

Finally, a new national ranking of campuses working toward zero waste debuted this week, and St. Thomas appears in the top 10. We are only one of two Midwestern institutions on this list, and we share the honor with University of California Berkeley, Carleton College, College of the Atlantic, and University of Vermont, among others. St. Thomas received an overall score of 55.1% and performed best in the areas of construction & renovation, purchasing & policies, and our compost & recycling system. Our summary scorecard **appears here. This effort was spurred by Undergraduate Student Government's Zero Waste Resolution last year.**